

i and would often drive me and another boy
as a pair with string reins. He was always full of fun; and
j at Midsummer, when he went home for the holidays in the
; basket of the Blackheath coach, fired away at the passers-by
with his pea-
! shooter.¹

• Another and less friendly account,
which appears to

j be based on the
recollections of his Jewish schoolfellow,
I describes Disraeli as

exercises. a lazy boy who excelled in none of the school
; ever, he would amuse his companions on a wet
half-holiday with a little extemporised drama. Being able
to draw he
: would also construct a castle in paper as the
: scene of the adventures which he described. He had a
: taste not un- common among schoolboys for little acts of
: bargaining and merchandise. . . . Mr. Potticany forbade
newspapers,
; but a clique, of which the two Jew boys were
members, were
far as politics,
; the talk of the embryo Premier was pronounced
Toryish.

! According to this writer the youthful
Benjamin was

I not only dramatist but actor ; in a school
performance of

i ' The Merchant of Venice ' he took the part
of Gratiano,

i but failed to win applause.²

i Meagre indeed, in other respects, is our
knowledge of

j those schooldays at Blackheath, though
they extended

: into a good many years. In both the
reminiscences that

have been cited we find touches that remind us of Disraeli's
: own pictures of the boyhood of his heroes in

: *Vivian Q-rey*

: and *Oontarini Fleming*; and these two
novels in their

turn, which have an autobiographic significance
above

that of all the others, may help us to imagine
what

manner of boy their author must have been. Like
both

his heroes we may surmise that he was daring and im-

• petuous, sometimes perhaps mutinous
and pugnacious ;

¹ Rev. E. Jones in the *Standard* of April 28, 1887. Mr. Jones
• was only six months younger than his protector, who
had no doubt,
however, both, physically and mentally, the
precocious development
of his race.

² *Jewish Chronicle*, May 29, 1868. Published
soon after Disraeli
had become Prime Minister for the first time, these
recollections are open
to the suspicion of having taken a colour from the
political animus of
later years.